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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001350

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: EU MEMBERS NEGATIVE ON GOE ACTIONS IN
SOMALIA, DOMESTIC POLITICS

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Kevin Sullivan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassadors from EU member states emerged angry and pessimistic from a 3-hour meeting with PM Meles April 18. They were reacting to the Prime Minister's comments on defeating the insurgency in Somalia as well as his remarks concerning upcoming local elections in Ethiopia, which they see as signaling an unmitigated hard line coming from the GOE. Meles told Amb. Yamamoto separately that he is still upset that the EU has not officially distanced itself from leaks of EU staff emails denouncing gross violations of human rights by ENDF soldiers and TFG militia in Somalia. COMMENT: Tensions between the EU and the GOE are nothing new, but their ties had seemed to be improving in recent months. Furthermore, the GOE can ill-afford to have the EU working against it in Somalia at this critical time. Both here in Addis and in capitals, the USG will need to continue dialogue with EU counterparts to balance their often one-sided view of matters pertaining to Ethiopia. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) At a diplomatic gathering in late April, local EU representative Tim Clarke and a number of key Member State ambassadors complained in bitter tones to Pol/Econ Counselor about a three-hour EU Heads of Mission meeting with Prime Minister Meles. Their general impression was the Prime Minister was confident that he could impose his will militarily both in Somalia and with respect to Ethiopia's domestic political situation.

EU: GOE APPROACH TO SOMALIA PURELY MILITARY ...

¶3. (C) On Somalia, Meles reportedly told EU ambassadors that the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) militia would crush the budding insurgency in Mogadishu. EU representatives came away from the meeting with the impression that the GOE thought it could prevail in Somalia by military means alone, dictating political outcomes and rewarding its allies, including TFG President Yusuf. They expressed deep skepticism about the sincerity of GOE statements in favor of a genuine political reconciliation in Somalia.

...AND DEMOCRATIZATION HEADED IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?

¶4. (C) Concerning domestic Ethiopian politics, the EU

ambassadors reported that Meles had warned them that the GOE had no intention of "letting things get out of control" in local elections later this year as they had following national elections in 2005. Furthermore, Meles had told the EU that a number of seemingly moderate opposition leaders, including both Merera Gudina and Beyene Petros of the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) had actually been operating outside the law, associating with illegal groups like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Given these statements, EU ambassadors had concluded that the democratization process in Ethiopia was now headed in the wrong direction. (Septel reports on the Ambassador's recent conversation with Merera and Beyene on this issue.)

15. (C) In a separate conversation in mid-April, PM Meles told Amb. Yamamoto that he was still upset that the EU had not formally distanced itself a leaked email from an EU staff member working on Somalia that highlighted alleged human rights abuses by ENDF personnel in Somalia.

EU NEEDS MORE BALANCED PICTURE OF GOE

16. (C) Tensions between the EU and the GOE are nothing new, but their ties had seemed to be improving in recent months as robust aid programs have been renewed. The GOE can ill-afford to have the EU working against its efforts in Somalia at this critical time. Amb. Yamamoto has been reaching out to a number of his colleagues to underscore that the GOE wants out of Somalia as soon as it feels it can leave, and also understands the need for more effective political reconciliation initiatives from the TFG. We have also told EU reps that there are some encouraging signs on the domestic front, including recent modifications to the

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draft media law as well as ongoing talks concerning detained opposition leaders from the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). Both here in Addis and in capitals, the USG will need to continue dialogue with EU counterparts to balance their often one-sided view of matters pertaining to Ethiopia.
YAMAMOTO